

Guerrilla girl is a historical novel set amidst the backdrop of the struggle for liberation of Zimbabwe. It is an account of women's involvement. Whilst the names of the characters are fictitious, most of the events and places are true.

Guerrilla Girl:
A Girl's echoing voice in the Zimbabwe Chimurenga
By Helen Gamanya

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GUERRILLA GIRL



A GIRL'S ECHOING VOICE
IN THE ZIMBABWE CHIMURENGA

HELEN GAMANYA

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Print ISBN: 978-1-958878-29-3

Ebook ISBN: 979-8-88531-390-2

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Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., Trenton, Georgia.

Printed on acid-free paper.

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2023

First Edition

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data

Gamanya, Helen D.

Guerrilla Girl: A Girl's echoing voice in the Zimbabwe Chimurenga
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Library of Congress Control Number: 2022923535

Chapter 6

Wiltshire Estates in Charter District covered miles and miles of rich fertile land. Thousands of black indigenous inhabitants of that whole area covered by the Estates and other settler farms had been evicted. Lucia was told this by one of the elderly teachers at Chakara Primary School. He was one of the people whose family was also evicted. He said, “We were banished to these concentrated areas of poor arid land, as you can see, the so-called reserves.” He went on, “even those reserves we can see, are meant not for Africans to live on permanently. They are still reserved for the white settlers. We can see we cannot own land in our own country. We are to be laborers on their farms.” The man sounded embittered alright, thought Lucia.

Concentrated and crowded areas of poor arid land were known as the “reserves”. Even those so-called “reserves” were meant not for Africans to live on permanently. The white government had other plans for these “reserves,” because more and more white farmers, coming into the country needed land. Africans were settled on these only temporarily. Africans were not to own land. They were to be laborers on the settler farms; Lucia repeated this to herself, quoting the elderly teacher.

“Half of Wiltshire Estates lay idle, and the other half is used for extensive animal husbandry. The number of cattle, pigs, etc, in there is unknown” the elderly teacher went on, “Africans are employed on that ranch as herdsmen and so on and they work hard for a wage below subsistence level,” the teacher complained to Lucia and added, “Rich farmlands occupied by other settlers adjoin the Wiltshire Estates, and these farmers are rich! I’m telling you.”

One September night, after Lucia had been at Chakara for about one year, one of the first major guerrilla operations in that area was scheduled. The weatherman, who had never been her admirer, had

predicted a very clear dry day. She had told herself that morning that, weathermen were eternal optimists. He was, however, right that day, Lucia thought. It was nice and dry. And Lucia could not wait for the moment!

At about eleven o'clock, that night, the Wiltshire Estates were set on fire. The fire was huge and it lit up the skies. It was spreading fast. The villagers had begun to be afraid that it was going to reach their settlements, even though, there were other settlers' farms and ranches between their settlements and the fire. From where she was, Lucia watched the fire with great delight. It seems to consume anything and everything that stood in its way. She knew by the size of the flames that the mission had been a success. It was a great inferno. The sky was bright with the "fire of freedom", she thought.

Lucia's work was to meet the combatants who had successfully carried out that big operation. She was waiting to take them to a hiding place. She waited impatiently. They seemed to be taking too long to arrive at the rendezvous. Then, two men approached. They reached the car which was parked under a huge Muhacha tree. But just as quickly, after seeing Lucia, they retreated. They took cover in the bushes some yards away, their pistols ready to shoot. They demanded an explanation from her. They wanted to know why she was at that spot. The password was "WEVU" (which meant "one who belonged to the soil," also, "an indigenous person, the owner of the land), so she loudly whispered the password. The password assured the combatants that she belonged to the underground movement. The pistols slowly found their way back into their holsters. They greeted her. But why a woman? The two men were puzzled. They knew that, generally, girls were used by the settler police to infiltrate the underground revolutionary organization.

"How can we know that this girl is not an informer in possession of the organization's identity card or password?" they asked each

other. However, they both got into the car and waited alertly, for the third comrade to show up. The comrade was the leader of the unit. After waiting for some time, Lucia asked, "What do you think has happened?" They just shrugged their shoulders, but one suggested that he returned to investigate. She decided, rather desperately, that she would go and look out for him herself. "No, let one of us go," It was too late. She was already on her way.

The commander of the unit had been late coming because he was a perfectionist, thought his colleagues. He wanted to make sure that even those who would come to the rescue of the ranch would meet some real trouble. So, he took some time planting land mines on some paths and approaching roads to the area. But he had also lost his way. At one point, as he was running towards what he thought was the direction of the meeting place, he had run into two wardens whom he gunned down and went on running. But suddenly he was shaking all over. He sat down under a tree jittering and unable to believe what was happening to him, he heard explosions. They were the land mines he had planted a few minutes before. But he did not know where he was and he was worried that his colleagues might be caught while waiting for him. He jumped up and started to run in a direction that he thought would lead him to the appointed place.

In the meantime, Lucia kept walking cautiously towards the scene of the explosions and the fire. She must have walked on for about a quarter of an hour when all of the sudden she saw the figure of a man running towards her. She decided to hide so that by mistake he would not mistake her as an enemy. He was passing just a few yards from where she was. She whispered loud enough for him to hear, "This way!" He stopped, reached for his pistol, and even as he swung round with it in his hand, he was aware of how foolish he looked. He knew that the person behind him could easily have shot him down. He noticed a girl standing there carrying a small first aid pack on her back.

“It’s all right! Let’s go this way,” Lucia told him, moving forward. “Don’t move!” he said, “Who are you and what are you doing here?” still aiming his gun at the girl. “Talk or I will shoot!” he demanded, no more shaking.

She lifted her hands high, gave the password “WEVU” and quickly stopped moving towards him, but continued whispering or rather hissing at him, “We are wasting valuable time comrade, don’t be unreasonable.” She was losing her patience. “Let’s go or we will be caught in a network of confusion.” He did not move. Even after she had identified herself to him as WEVU, the man was not satisfied. He did not trust women at all. Women were a security risk, he thought. They can easily serve the interest of the settler regime as informers. Why did those people at Headquarters decide to send a woman to meet them? He wondered whether they were running short of able men now that they were resorting to using women. This is putting us into unforeseen problems indeed!

If this woman turns out to be an agent of the enemy, I’ll kill her, he decided and continued to be very cautious and careful. But this couldn’t go on indefinitely. Either way, he would end up in the enemy’s hands if he remained there or went with this woman. “Ok, you lead the way, with your hands up still, I’m watching you!” he commanded, using his pistol as a pointer.

She started moving gracefully and quickly among the trees and shrubs in front of him. Every now and then she would turn and look at him and smile. She seemed to have recognized this man. Finally, they spotted the car parked under the huge Muhacha tree, and suddenly he regained his bearings. The area became familiar. He used to lead his small commando unit to that place during their reconnaissance trips. As the leader of the group and commander in charge of that operation, he had visited the place several times. He was the one who, in fact, had recommended the very spot for the rendezvous after the operation, but

the woman? He thought they were not told that the driver of the mini station wagon car which would pick them up would be a woman. Just how far could these people trust her? Perhaps the enemy had already infiltrated the movement, he suspected.

When they approached the car, his colleagues came out of the car. He recognized them straight away. He took them aside and secretly warned them to watch the girl very closely. “Any monkey tricks, knife!” he told them.

“Comrades,” Lucia called, “You are being very difficult for no good reason at all. Let’s move out of here quickly before we are caught in the maze.” Two of the combatants sat at the back and the commander took the front seat still watching her suspiciously. Lucia got in quickly, glanced at the man beside her for a second, then started the car. She drove fast and the silence in the car, she knew, was just as much not fear of the speed as of the suspicion that they still harboured against her. She again looked at the man beside her and smiled as if to say, “I got you, if you decide to shoot me, we all die, and for what?” She definitely recognized the guy. Tichaona Munyoro from Chiweshe, and she sighed, and then broke the silence:

“I know your pistols are trained and ready to shoot me in the back if I give you any reason to, comrades,” she suddenly said to them, “but surely, comrade Tichaona, you of all people, have no reason to be as suspicious as the others,” she added.

“What; why not?” Tichaona asked, tried to stand up from his seat; bumped his head onto the roof of the car, “What did you say? And how do you know who I am? What is this?” He fumbled, almost opened the car, and then decided against that.

“As a revolutionary fighter, you must also train your memory comrade. Do they call you Tichaona, by the way, or Mr. Munyoro?” She asked, enjoying the advantage she now had over him. “Anyway, I thank God and I am glad you didn’t knock me down, at first sight, a

while ago. I am also thankful that the two shots I heard just before that were not aimed at you,” she added and went on, “I’m just trying to get over the shock and the idea that you or anyone of you could have shot me down like a rabbit.” She sighed loudly and thought to herself: this was close. We need to improve our setups, then she asked, “What had happened back there? Why the gunfire?”

“No,” Tichaona replied hesitantly, then, “Two wardens came my way and...” He stopped talking and, as if a cloud had been lifted from his memory, looked at Lucia curiously, for a while. Then he exclaimed, “Say! My goodness! I know who you are! Wow!” He could not believe his eyes.

“Who am I?” Lucia asked with a pleasant smile, facing him, momentarily.

“Yes, I remember you, Lucia. Teacher Lucia Kashangu! How could I have ever forgotten you like this?” He went on, “This is terrible! Ever since that day, I have been wondering about you, what had happened to you and so on... I have been yearning for you. I’ve never managed to hear a bit about you.” He sighed. “Now, there you are, and I almost finished you all together today. My goodness! Who, who is behind all this?” he asked. “This is the worst arrangement ever planned so far. The guys should have warned us. Well...” He kept quiet for some time.

Tichaona then introduced Lucia to the other combatants. He told them he had been thinking of this Lucia for a long time, wondering what had happened to her since that day, but had never thought of meeting her under guerrilla circumstances. ‘No!’ he thought, “Lucia is too precious to be involved in this kind of business. I wonder who talked her into joining this work.” Tichaona was thinking that she should be discouraged from this work right away. It’s the work for men, he thought. “She could help in another capacity but not this’ he resolved to dissuade her from this business.” “I say, Lucia,” Tichaona

said after a short silence, “Tell me, what happened to you since we got arrested and separated that day at the Central Police Station?”

“First of all before we go any further, what about you calling me comrade Lucia?” she asked cheerfully but meaning it. He stopped smiling, thought for a moment:

“All right, comrade Lucia,” he said reluctantly. “Tell us your story,” Tichaona replied, not as cheerfully anymore, Lucia detected.

Lucia related to them the story of her past. She started it from the day she last saw Tichaona being pushed into a dark room at the end of the corridor, by a policeman at the Central Police Station on Salisbury’s Railway Avenue, up to this meeting. They were all surprised. One of the comrades sitting at the back of the car said, he now recalled the person called Lucia, being talked about at the underground headquarters. He had heard a lot about a lady school teacher by the name of Lucia being one of the intelligence people for the underground and also for transportation. But he had never expected that lady teacher to be involved this far. It’s too dangerous for the woman, he thought to himself. She is in danger of being harmed by any one of the combatants by mistake.

It was about two o’clock in the morning when they arrived at the school. Everything was quiet. Lucia had two bedrooms, a dining room, and a kitchen. She had converted the other bedroom into a ‘store room’, big enough to accommodate more than seven people. One entrance to the ‘store room’ was in the kitchen. And it was not difficult to give the combatants what they wanted when the need arose. No one could ever suspect that ‘store room’ to be a hideout for human beings....

The next morning, the police arrived at the school with the usual interrogations and searching. Lucia was called for a private consultation by a member of the Special Branch (SB) with whom she ‘worked’ and was given some instructions to carry out in order to help

the police to catch the saboteurs who may wander into the school grounds. She listened carefully to the instructions and at the same time asked questions that she thought could help her know the movements of the police so far and the extent of the damage caused by the terrorists. She was told that some suspects were held. Most of the African workers were arrested. But nothing was said about the spotting of any car or about her trip that previous night. ‘We are safe so far,’ she thought, saying goodbye to the SB men.

“The voice of Zimbabwe,” a clandestine radio station operated by the guerrilla movement from a neighboring country, announced, “The revolutionary forces have destroyed one of the pillars of the economy of the enemy.” On the other hand, the settler radio claimed that their forces had destroyed an incredibly high number of “terrorists” in an engagement of which the radio did not give details. The settler radio said nothing about the casualties and the damage they had suffered. Understandably, that was the psychological war game being played. One side highlighted its own ‘successes’ and deflated its real setbacks. Nothing of substance actually remained in the Wiltshire Estates after the fire. Lucia had heard this from her informers in the Special Branch. Livestock and crops on the vast tracts of land which made up what was the Wiltshire Estates, the information said, were reduced to charcoal. It was impossible to save anything from that inferno, because anyone, including the firefighters who tried to advance towards the fire, first met the land mines, and were quickly blown to pieces. These Estates were the biggest suppliers of milk and meat. Now one could see only the fat surrounding the burnt carcasses. It was terrible, the Special Branch man had concluded his report to Lucia, shaking his head sadly. Lucia on her part had pretended to be very sorry and she promised to work hard to flash out the culprits if she could. In her heart, she was actually rejoicing for the success of that one.

The fire had spread to as far as the main road, past where Lucia had parked her car waiting for the combatants. The huge Muhacha tree was burnt down completely. Some neighboring white farms were not spared either. That was one of the first victories for the suffering black masses of Zimbabwe, she thought. The three guerrillas spent three days in Lucia's house waiting for instructions from headquarters. By the end of the second day, they had relaxed and Lucia was very happy because she learned how to use firearms. No firing was done, but she had all the theories grounded in her head. She had the fighters discuss with her the theoretical tactics of guerrilla warfare. Tichaona was a good instructor but was still reluctant. He tried to discourage her from getting too interested in becoming a combatant. He did not succeed. She told him she intended to fight with the others until Zimbabwe was free. In the circumstances, Tichaona, now that he had found her again, pledged secretly to work hard to try and dissuade her. He believed he would succeed, one day. He had fallen in love with her the very first moment he had met her in the bus the day they were arrested together. He had been crying for her all that time, hoping to see her again.

Finally, instructions came from headquarters. Lucia was to drive the three commandos, including the one who had brought the instructions, to their next assignment. She was to wait for them at a rendezvous, then drive them away to another hide-out. She wanted to take part in that operation, but the comrade who had come from headquarters and joined the three combatants refused. Tichaona had thanked his lucky stars for that one. They reminded her that the instructions were that she was in charge of transportation and nothing else. Tichaona was relieved. He did not want her in any actual combat at all. She was dangerously deep in it already he thought he didn't like it.

From the time he was arrested together with Lucia, Tichaona had been through very difficult circumstances. But he had never stopped

thinking of her. He had sat down to tell his colleagues and Lucia the whole story from the day he was separated from Lucia, at the Central Police Station in Salisbury, up to now. Tichanoa was put in one of the interrogation cells of the settler police, he started his story, under a very harsh plain clothed white barbarian, he remembered, whom he said, behaved like an animal. The white man, he explained worked with two African CIDs. And he commanded the CIDs to beat Tichaona until he was unconscious if he refused to confess the truth. They waited for him to come round only to start on him again. The Whiteman himself took over with questions and heavy slaps on Tichaona's face. Everything that this brutal fascist policeman would think capable of forcing a confession from his victim was done.

The two black men did whatever he commanded them to do to the letter. "Just beat his lights out. He has to know something," the white officer had commanded the two black men who obeyed like two kids. In fact, many confessions were forced out of suspects. Many times, the suspects made the confessions in order to save themselves from the brutalities that the white ape was capable of unleashing. Tichaona went on. The African CISs were afraid of their boss. They obeyed his orders instantly, without question.

"Now you bloody dog," the white detective shouted at Tichaona. "Tell me what's happening in your area? Why were you arrested? What did you do?" he demanded.

"What do you mean?" asked Tichaona. The white man's forehead twitched. This was a very important sign to his African detectives. It showed them that he was getting angry, and he expected them to act on the suspect. The first detective, called Amosi, pounced on Tichaona like an excited cat, slapping him on the cheek. He shouted, partly to intimidate Tichaona into making a confession quickly, and partly to impress his white superior with his high sense of duty, devotion, and

loyalty to the white man personally and to the colonial regime generally, thought Tichaona, feeling sick.

“Those disturbances in your area,” the black detective Amosi, shouted, slapping him again and again, “We know what you people in Chiweshe Reserve are planning,” the black detective said. “Do you think we do not know?” and added, “We know more than you realize,” he said furiously glancing at the white boss who was seated on a chair watching, his face still twitching.

“Well, if you know everything,” said Tichaona, “Then what has that got to do with me?”

“Come on, you bloody fool!” shouted the white man to the second black detective, called Herija, who was just standing there. He was expected to do the beating of Tichaona as his colleague was doing. African detective Herija started, “You think you are clever, hm?” he asked and added, “We will serve you right, just wait and see.”

“Do as you please. But you two can see that I am your brother and am innocent.” This infuriated the black detectives.

“I have no brother like you, you fool,” retorted detective Amosi. They began hitting on Tichaona with their fists, heads, kicks, and Amosi even threw his whole self upon Tichaona. They pounded his bleeding face with their uncontrollable fists and shoed feet.

“Carry on until the devil comes to his senses! I know he knows something,” the white man commanded, and he went out leaving the African detectives, who went on beating the guts out of their fellow Zimbabweans. He was beaten so that he would tell the truth! The interrogators believed that since the peasants in Tichaona’s area had created some disturbances some time ago, and since they were now quiet, they had to be planning something more dreadful against the settler authority. The detectives thought Tichaona must have known their plans because he came from that area. That was the logic of the ugly oppressor and his African detective constables. But was that the

truth? Tichaona asked himself. The truth of the matter was that Tichaona was absolutely innocent. He was only an ordinary Zimbabwean youth, who, like many other youths was becoming more and more politically conscious.

Tichaona's father, Mr. Tendekayi Munyoro had been among some peasants in Chiweshe Reserve, who went to the "Native Commissioner" and in front of his office, burnt their "Chitupas". They had refused to pay poll-tax and refrained from taking their cattle and other livestock to the dipping tanks. Many of them were arrested, including old man Munyoro. Many peasants, frightened to death by the appearance of some of these ugly and rough white police officers, confessed falsely in the hope that doing so would spare them from beatings. They still received beatings anyway and heavy prison sentences or heavy fines even after the confessions. They could be punished for having done what they had confessed, even if falsely.

The Africans in Chiweshe Reserve, like others throughout the country had become quiet, helplessly quiet. The worst repressive measures had been unleashed against them by the settler regime's judges. What else did the settler colonial police expect from those helpless oppressed black people? When Tichaona came out of detention, he had found his old man, Mr. Munyoro facing a heavy prison sentence with hard labor or paying a heavy fine. Tichaona managed, with the help of friends, to save his father by paying the heavy fine. What truth now did those settler police want from him? He wondered.

"Brothers," Tichaona called after the white terrorist had gone out of the room. "What is it that I have done that you are so prepared to kill me for?"

"Save your breath, you bloody fool. You think the white man is here to fool around with idiots like you?" shouted detective Amosi.

At that accusation, Tichaona spat a large amount of bloody spit right into detective Amosi's face and said, "You running dogs of the white devils! Your days are numbered." He stammered on, "The day of judgment is coming; it's quite near for you now. You kill me today you won't stop the wind of revolution. It will start with all of you running dogs. Your settler pig bosses won't be able to save you. They will not be here to, save you. I will see to that," he struggled to utter the last words because the infuriated detectives had increased their ferocity, pounding, stumping, slapping, kicking, and punching him. They wished their white boss was there to see just how well they could do their job. Tichaona stopped talking and started to cough and groan very deeply. All fell silent and black all around him. A trickle of blood oozed from his nose and mouth. He was unconscious. The two fellow Zimbabweans had gone on without realizing that they were pounding an almost dead body.

African detective Herija stopped beating and shouted: "He is dead!" He rushed out of the room, wet with sweat, to call the white detective who replied coolly, "You have killed him, not me. I wasn't there." He talked so lightly that detective Herija was rooted to the ground.

For the first time, something in Herija's heart was disturbed. He was stunned by the white man's remarks and obvious lack of appreciation for the work done so conscientiously well. Herija kept standing there sweating, waiting for further instructions.

"You bloody fool! Look at yourself. Do something about it," the white man shouted, spitting terror through his teeth and viewing the trembling African detective all over as if he was something nauseating. Detective Herija could not stand it. He quickly ran out of the room to fetch a bucket of cold water. He ran to where Tichaona's body was lying slumped up and splashed the whole bucket of cold water on his head and body. Herija murmured to himself, "I am not going to beat

him again, not me. They can sack me if they want to. This man is innocent, and I know it.”

“Well,” answered detective Constable Amosi, “I am not going to stop beating him because he spat into my face. He shouldn’t have done that to me. No one has ever spat on me, let alone with his bloody spit. I’ll beat him on,” Amosi went on like a caged leopard. “He can’t do a thing like that to me and expect me to be silent and only feel sorry for him. No, not me. May be before he had spat on me, but certainly not now! He shouldn’t have done that!”

“Carry on my friend, please yourself,” said Herija. “I am through with this job.” At that same time, the white detective entered the room.

“What did you say?” the white man asked his eyes straight at Herija. “You bloody devils; you don’t know how stupid you are. Throw him into his bloody cell. He will be all right. If not, then you two have done it, not me.” He said this as he marched out of the room. Herija was baffled. The white detective was actually accusing them of killing their fellow blackman. Did the white man care? Herija asked himself. No! He did not care. As long as he could use one black man against another for his express benefit, all was in order. In this case it did not matter at all if the black man died, Herija thought. What mattered was a white man to die at the hands of a black man! Herija, this time was thinking like a converted black man.

Tichaona did not know for how long he had lain where he was when he recovered his consciousness. Though it was dark, Tichaona realized that he was back in his original cell. When did I come back here?’ He started thinking. I know I left this room at dawn with two African men and was in a room where there was the most vicious white man I have ever encountered in my life. His head was as if a heavy stone was pressing it down. His clothes were wet. He tried to get up. He fell back. Never before had his body ached so much with pain.

They had reduced him to a cabbage, he thought! He was helpless. Never before had he hated another human being as he did at that time. He hated the oppressive system that was responsible for bringing him into that solitary cell. That was Tichaona's third day in police custody. He lay there in terrible pain, and started thinking of the beautiful girl, Lucia. Her face appeared in his mind. Are they treating her as they are treating me, he wondered, and he prayed, "Please God, let this be for me alone. How can that girl stand all this?" He wondered whether he would ever see Lucia again, or whether they would both die in those torture chambers. His mind wandered. He thought of things he had never thought would come into his mind. But one thing puzzled him. How could those brothers of his, the black detectives, beat him more than the white man had actually ordered them to do? How can a Zimbabwean want to beat another Zimbabwean to death only to please the white foreigner? He wondered whether it was the fear of the white man or love for money that drove those black detectives to give him such a beating. He fell asleep again.

Tichaona was awakened by a loud order, "You, get up, you!" There was light outside. He could see the light coming in through the small, barred window high up near the ceiling. 'Another day? How long have I been lying in this place?' He could not remember. "I said get up, can't you hear?" It was detective Herija, who pulled him up rather roughly. Tichaona could not stand it. Every part of his body was in pain. He was very weak and hungry too. Amosi just peeped through the door and shrugged his shoulders.

Tichaona's mouth tasted like rotten eggs. When he staggered up, he felt dizzy, and he fell back and banged his head very hard on the wall and slumped down on the floor in terrible pain. His vision was blurred. He saw double images of detective Herija. Herija remained alone with Tichaona. Detective Amosi had hurriedly left the cell. Herija said to Tichaona: "I did not mean to do that", he whispered

hurriedly. “Now listen very carefully. Carry on, pretending as if you are still unconscious. Even if they pour cold water on you or slap you do not stir or flinch. I am sure they will leave you alone, at least for a while.”

Tichaona was surprised by those words and advice from one of the men who had tortured him to near death. He almost asked, “Why are you wasting your breath, you running dog?” But he had no strength to talk and so he obeyed. After a few minutes, the white detective came in followed by detective Amosi. Tichaona was slapped twice across the face by the white detective. That was really painful but he kept still, praying that the slapping was not repeated, he would not take anymore without moving, or fainting, maybe forever.

“Bring some icy cold water,” commanded the white man. Tichaona heard heavy hurrying footsteps. They faded away and soon were heard again, each time becoming louder and obviously drawing nearer. Splash! The water was thrown on his face. ‘Goodness, this is cold!’ he thought, but he never stirred. The act was repeated and he was soaked all over in icy cold water. The white man felt for his pulse and said: “His bloody heart is alive all right. Leave him lying in the cold water for a while, he will come round,” the white man ordered and walked out of the room hurriedly.

“He has been unconscious for too long.” Tichaona heard. It was the voice of detective Herija who went on: “They must call a doctor or take him out of here.” I have now got a friend here, Tichaona thought.

“What?” asked detective Amosi. “He will have to be all right. Otherwise, even if he dies, I will beat his dead body to nothing. He should not have spit on my face yesterday.” He then promised more beatings for Tichaona and went out.

So have I have been lying here in this state since yesterday,’ wondered Tichaona. It’s not too bad, he consoled himself. I thought it has been more than a week. Detective Herija, Tichaona’s new friend,

had remained behind while Amosi had left the room. He was the one who had the keys to the cell. He said to Tichaona, holding him under the shoulders and helping him up, “Come on, get up and lie in that corner there where it is dry.”

“Why are you trying to help me after all?” Tichaona asked weakly, while he was being helped to move from the wet spot to a dry corner of the cell. He wanted to say something else.

“Sh, sh, sh, sh! Don’t talk. Just obey. Don’t ask questions,” Herija warned. “Should I go on pretending to be a near corpse?” Tichaona asked. Herija nodded approvingly and said, “I will try to come and see you again myself.” “I appreciate your help, son of the soil,” said Tichaona, but he still couldn’t see why he would do all this after beating his guts out. “Shh....! Quiet,” detective Herija ordered as he went out, locking the door behind him.

Well, at least, there is a brother for me in this place. What next? I know I have to lie in the cold water for a while, Tichaona went on thinking. He remembered Lucia again. Her image kept on lingering in his mind. The image of a suffering Lucia, after being badly beaten by a black policeman at the command of a fierce white police pig, kept on looming in his imagination. ‘Lord! Why should she face such untold suffering? She is innocent. She is only too innocent, and...

He was awakened from his imagination by footsteps, then the jingling of keys in his door. He tensed, and then thank goodness it was Herija. Herija had brought Tichaona a dry blanket. “I could not bring you dry clothes,” he told Tichaona. Tichaona felt good, although he was still shivering uncontrollably, and the pain!

“What’s the next thing brother?” Tichaona asked, his whispering coming through clenched teeth due to the cold and shivering.

“I don’t know, but you are still half dead, okay? At least for another short while,” replied Herija.

This time Tichaona felt confident to ask Herija about Lucia, “Tell me, brother, how is the lady?”

“I don’t know. I have not seen her. I only heard that you were arrested together with a girl,” Herija replied.

“I hope she is not receiving the same type of treatment I am receiving,” Tichaona whispered. His friend seems to have ignored this last remark, but he said:

“Listen, when you hear people coming to your door, keep the blanket to that corner behind the door. Move quickly to your original place in the cold water and lie as still as you were when we first left you,” advised detective Herija.

Tichaona nodded. He dreaded that moment and shivered even more violently. Herija left and locked the room. Tichaona felt thirsty. There was a patch of water on the floor where he had been lying. He knelt, bent down, and licked the floor for the water, like a dog. This made him feel better, although the shivering increased. For a long time, Tichaona, gritting his teeth, wondered how he would be able to keep still, pretending to be half dead if he went on shivering with the same intensity. He tried to take his mind off the fact that he was sick and was feeling cold. He thought of his father. His father had informed him that when he was under police custody, he was mercilessly beaten. He never elaborated. Actually, the old man did not want to remember that dreadful past. He never wanted to talk about it, not even to his son. Tichaona recalled how he had tried to coax his father into telling him what had happened, but failed. Was my father beaten like this? Tichaona asked himself and went on. If he was, that old man must be very strong and courageous. But how can these devils treat such an old man like this? It’s incredible! The devils!

Several footsteps were approaching and soon were right at his door. He moved fast back to the puddle of water and lay on his tummy with his face down. He had relaxed a bit, and only that way, lying on

his tummy, could he keep still and not shiver violently. People entered Tichaona's cell. Someone touched his temple and said: "He is alive." Tichanoa instantly recognized the voice of the fierce white detective, who went on, "Should I give him a slap on the cheek? He may wake up, you know." "Yes, some of these guys are very good at pretending, I know," said the shameless voice of African detective Amosi. "And so?" asked the new European voice rather cynically. "You must really be good at beating political criminals," the new voice said and went on, "Were you the ones who did this to this fellow?" and added sarcastically, "And you still want to go on doing it to him even if he is half dead?" There was silence for a few seconds. Even the fierce white detective said nothing. Then Tichaona felt hands touching his wet clothes, "And he is soaking wet! Where did the water come from?" asked the newcomer.

"We were trying to revive him, sir, by pouring icy cold water over him," replied African detective constable Herija.

"Did it work?" "No," Herija replied.

"Then why did you leave him lying in the pool of water?" asked the man, who, by now sounded to Tichaona to be a superior person to all those he had so far met. He went on asking, sarcastically: "Did you want to drown him?"

"These were orders from sergeant Fielding," Detective Herija replied firmly.

The big white detective looked sharply at Herija, and a very strong, "You bloody liar," accused sergeant Fielding, his forehead twitching, "Watch what you say, you bloody idiot!" he warned strongly, the twitching becoming more violent and spreading to the whole face and the upper limbs. Herija has put himself into trouble with his boss, thought Tichaona, listening very attentively.

It was only at this time that Tichaona realized that the big white detective was called Fielding and he was a sergeant. I hope I shall meet

this Fielding in the field of battle, one-day' Tichaona thought, I'll beat his lights out in a minute, no matter how big he is.

"Never mind Mr. Fielding," said the superior man. "Get him out of here and give him dry clothes and something to eat and drink." Tichaona was surprised that even the ugly and fierce white man, who had ordered him to be beaten to death, the one who had sounded as if he owned that whole part of the world, could also be given orders and obey them without question. He is a paper tiger after all, even if he is the terror itself, thought Tichaona.

The two African detectives removed Tichaona by carrying him out of the wet cell, to another solitary cell not far from the one he was being removed from. Amosi spat at Tichaona's face, "You thank your lucky stars, you bloody bastard." Tichaona was confined to a lonely cell again, which was his bedroom, dining room, and toilet, the unimaginable and unbearable rotten stench!

There had been a reign of terror in Rhodesia since the state of emergency. Many Zimbabweans, especially males, were beaten to death in those notorious cells which were known as "the grilling chambers for political prisoners." Those who came out alive could in most cases be mentally deranged. Tichaona did not die, nor did he become mentally deranged. After one month of solitary confinement, Tichaona was charged with insulting the Prime minister of the regime, and threatening to overthrow the minority clique by violent means. He was sentenced to seven months in prison with hard labor. He was given no option of a fine.

It was hard labor in the truest sense, Tichaona remembered. Tichaona's group, most of them political prisoners, plus some hardcore criminals were building a military road through the jungles of Zimbabwe to the North West section of the country, right up to the Zambezi River that borders a neighboring country Zambia. The beating and the hard labor that Tichaona encountered extremely

hardened him against the settlers. While serving his sentence he was quiet, followed all orders, and worked as hard as was expected. The African prison wardens soon became friendly to him, since they had no cause to hate or roughen him. He was quiet and followed their orders. He even helped them keep discipline among other prisoners. He used to tell his inmates, “Friends, let us not behave like criminals, even though these people have tried to paint crime on us. Our day will come when they will all be criminals after our judgment.”

This way, Tichaona gained friends and respect among the prison inmates, as well as the prison wardens. During the hard work, he never forgot the sneering face and the barking voice of sergeant Fielding. Another thing he thought of was the people’s army. He kept thinking about it. He knew that one day he may need the knowledge of those surroundings. He would visually survey the area very carefully. Tichaona saw a big advantage in the building of that road. It would serve both the liberation and the colonial armies, he thought.

He completed his prison sentence. On his release, some of his prison warden friends secretly promised him that they would help the Zimbabwean nationalist movement in any way possible, so he should keep them informed. Tichaona went to his place of work but he found he had been dismissed. They don’t employ terrorists, he was told. He, therefore, left for Chiweshe Reserve where he started helping his father on the small field allotted to their family. He was restless. That sergeant Fielding, he thought, a name I will never forget. A face I will never forget! His restlessness increased. More thought about this sergeant Fielding always made his heart burn with rage. ‘How can I fight back that white terror? I have to find a way.’ He consulted his father: “Can’t these white settlers be fought out of our country? If I think of that sergeant Fielding, I strongly feel a way has to be there some way to bring justice back to this country.”

“Ah! Tichaona, I forgot to tell you that a liberation army has been formed while you were in jail, and it is already very active against the Boers.” His father told him about the existence of the underground movement. Tichaona stopped what he was doing and gave his attention to the old man. He was surprised that the old man had all this information about the struggle! He felt so small and ignorant.

He asked his father to give him more information about the underground movement. His father gave him some details. In their area, one of the underground organizers was Mr. Sanganayi, who used to be a headmaster at Muzhanje Primary School, where Lucia had been teaching. He was then a driver for the removals. He drove huge removals across Rhodesia to and from the neighboring countries, transporting agricultural implements and other heavy goods. While thus engaged, it was easy for Sanganayi to give a ‘lift’ to freedom fighters, or lift their essential equipment within Rhodesia from one point to another, to and from some neighboring countries.

In a few days, Tichaona had made contact with Sanganayi, and informed him of his intentions. Tichaona had maintained his contact with his prison warden friends. When they learned that he was going to join the revolutionary army, they also expressed their desire to join. He begged the wardens to remain at their work so that they could help the movement with vital information from within the enemy’s camp. Tichaona’s friend, Herija, the detective, also pledged to help with information. Herija, in the end, turned out to be more useful to the underground movement than the prison wardens, because of his place as a member of the Special Branch, in the enemy’s establishment. He was very tactful and was never suspected.

There was this place where Tichaona and his fellow prisoners had worked, constructing a road between Salisbury and a border town of Chirundu through the deep forests to the northwest of Zimbabwe. Tichaona had recommended this area as suitable for guerrilla training

and other guerrilla activities. Sanganayi consulted the headquarters and within a few days some surveyors from the underground movement were sent to the area together with Tichaona. This place was found to be suitable for the training of guerrillas.

Tichaona, some of his prison-mates, and other men were given two trained comrades--one of them was Munongwa--to train them in guerrilla tactics and warfare. One of Tichaona's former prison wardens called Museve insisted on leaving his job to be fully involved in the training. He was accepted and they worked very hard together in their training. Tichaona, a very determined, strong, and brave young man, soon became commander of this newly-trained commando group. Tichaona's unit armed itself initially through what they called "requisition missions" against the enemy. These were special missions aimed at acquiring equipment and other supplies from the enemy depot and carving out sabotage operations against the enemy. Naturally, these missions involved long-distance walking and running.

"It is my prison warden friend Museve here, and fellow prisoner Rukwa here," Tichaona told Lucia as he touched his two comrades' shoulders intimately, "with whom I was trained. We have carried out a number of missions together," he added, "more or less successfully," Tichaona concluded the account of his experiences so far. Lucia was really spellbound by Tichaona's sad experiences. She felt sorry for him but was happy about his successes in the liberation army.

Linda continued her work, often in contact with Tichaona and his colleagues. He continued to discourage her from her work with the underground, but she persisted. The underground movement had planned that throughout Rhodesia, certain strategic shops in towns and cities must be sabotaged. These were the ones owned by the minority regime's business supporters who practiced strict colour discrimination. The attacks were to be carried out simultaneously

against those targets, and a suitable occasion was considered. One of the holidays may be Christmas or Easter holidays.

It was found out that the settlers respected their Rhodes and Founders holidays in July more than other holidays of the year. These were celebrated for four full days, in honour of those first British pioneer colonialists, like Cecil John Rhodes and others, who supposedly founded or discovered the rich colony of “Southern Rhodesia” to add to the British Empire. The Rhodes and Founders were the most important and most respected political holidays in this British colony. Most of the settler farmers and their families used to make sure that they spent these holidays drinking and merry-making and relaxing in towns. Endless parties would be organized for the celebration of this occasion. During those holidays there would be more whites in the towns, especially the large towns like Salisbury, Bulawayo, Umtali, Gwelo, than during normal days.

Most of the African workers and their families, on the other hand, this was a good chance for them to spend the holidays in their rural homes with relatives and friends. They had no cause to celebrate, they thought.

The operation was organized for the day before the Rhodes and Founders holidays when the whites frantically did their shopping in the major towns’ shops throughout the country. These shops, the underground movement decided, were an institution in themselves that maintained the policy of segregation in support of the minority regime. White settler farmers would be busy going from one department store to another doing their last-minute shopping and dining and wining in these department shops’ cozy restaurants. Most of the blacks would be busy at the Musika (Market) bus terminus for long-distance buses to the ‘reserves’.

These department stores in the towns would usually be packed with goods in the periods preceding major holidays. Lucia, Tichaona,

and Museve were assigned to Salisbury. They were to join Marwei's group of two girls. Certain shops in Salisbury were well known for their color discrimination. Among those identified were the L and M Silliaris, Drumonds and Bollars, Serworks and Jacquelines, and a few others. These were stores virtually for whites only. They also provided exquisite restaurants for the shoppers. The color line was solid. Exceptions were, however, made for selected well-dressed Africans who wanted to do their shopping in these elegant department stores. In these stores, prices tended to be higher than in others such as the OK Bazaars, Woolworths, and so on. These department stores were in fact meant to serve the upper class of the white society. Most Africans avoided patronizing these shops anyway. They hated, above all, the sneers they got from the scornful white and colored girls who served at the counters, and the black watchmen, who were stricter and even more discriminative than the whites themselves.

The organizers of the sabotage operation had to do all they could to warn the Zimbabweans against being near the huge department stores on the day stipulated for the action. It wasn't difficult. They simply went around telling the people and reminding them of the high prices and the color line. "Leave the whites to do the shopping in their own stores," the organizers persuaded the people. "Why be bothered by segregation? Why should you go there only to be humiliated, when your objective is only to buy and to buy using your own money?" They went on, "Rhodes and Founders' holidays have nothing to do with us, anyway." They asked, "Why should we pretend that we are happy with those days when we are not? We can do our shopping on other days which have nothing to do with the oppressor's days of happiness over our oppression." The campaign to warn the people went smoothly.

On the day before the Rhodes and Founders' holidays, Marwei and Lucia's group, of two smartly dressed young men and three girls, moved lackadaisically among the shoppers. They carried all sorts of

“shopping bags” and “parcels”, doing the shopping, in their own style. Their targets were the identified huge department stores. They went on, ‘forgetting’ some of their ‘parcels’ and ‘bags’ very conveniently and discretely among the packed goods and crowded shops. Shupai recalled how she had to buy a very expensive dress in Jacquelines in order to have a parcel to carry since she had just disposed of her last ‘parcel’. They all had to buy something in return, she remembered.

The operation was successful. Lucia, Tichaona, and Museve heard the news on her car radio on their way back to Chakara School. Marwei and her friends were back in Mufakose Township where they lived. The bombs went off at the time set. In Salisbury, the explosions could be heard a long distance away, in the segregated townships. Lucia thought, Yes, that was destruction and a half! The operation shook the wits out of the settlers throughout the country.

The roots of white settler power were shaken. Many whites died in Salisbury and Bulawayo, Umtali, Gwelo, and other locations. During the Rhodes and Founders’ holidays, the rich white farmers and their families usually migrated into the cities. Even those in small towns had the habit of going to the large cities to spend their time and money merry-making. But this time, the few Africans who did not heed the advice of their fellow Africans not to be shopping in those stores or to be in the city centers around that time were caught in the maze. The Rhodes and Founders’ holidays of that year were turned into days of mourning instead of days of dining and wining, merry-making and laughter.

Rescue workers worked day and night digging out bodies buried in heaps of rubble; the radio reported the following day that L and M Silliars both in Salisbury and Bulawayo and Gwelo were the tallest buildings. They had the largest number of departments and cozy restaurants than other huge stores. L and M Silliars, naturally,

produced larger and deeper heaps of rubble than the other stores attacked, the underground organizers noticed.

As usual, the settler police had some suspects arrested. But that did not remedy the damage caused to property owned by settlers, nor did it help the lives that perished in the operation. Two settler farmers who had lost their families in the attack were talking. One said, "I have nothing to live for anymore," and went on, "I am packing my bags and am quitting this God-forsaken place and country."

"Where will you go?" asked his friend and neighbour.

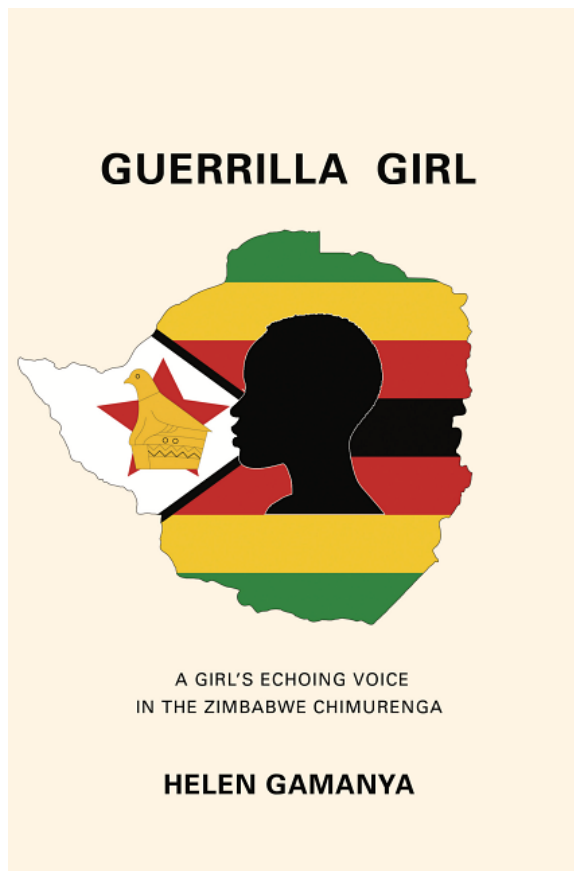
"I will go down south. It is safer there than this goddamned kaffir country," replied the first settler, and went on, "Some crazy friends advise that I should stay and try to revenge the death of my wife and two sons. But that won't satisfy me. That won't bring my family back. These kaffirs are up to no good anymore, man. They are up in arms against us. They mean to kill us all." He continued, "This time they really mean business. They might catch me before I catch them, to carry out the suggested revenge." He continued bitterly, "I fought the Nazis in the Second World War. That was enough. I have neither the stomach nor the time to fight against these brutal and hungry Natives. After all, just as Hitler could not defeat us in our own land, we can't defeat these Natives in their own land."

"That's what you think," declared the second settler farmer, "I will stay right here. Any kaffir who provokes me will be in trouble." "I'll make sure I kill six of them. Each one for my mother, my wife, my daughter, and for my three sons."

Many of these settlers left the country. Most of those who had farms bordering the "Reserves" left their farms altogether for the towns and cities because they had become easy targets for the hungry and oppressed natives.

Immediately after depositing the several "shopping bags and parcels" where they were supposed to have been deposited, the

sabotage teams had left the towns for the reserves to spend the Rhodes and Founders holidays with relatives and friends. Marwei and her two friends were the only members of the group who lived in Salisbury, at Mufakose Township. She and many residents of Mufakose heard, with pleasure the deafening explosions in town. That's it, she thought.



Guerrilla girl is a historical novel set amidst the backdrop of the struggle for liberation of Zimbabwe. It is an account of women's involvement. Whilst the names of the characters are fictitious, most of the events and places are true.

Guerrilla Girl:
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